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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ITEM IN THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

EFFECTIVE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION THROUGH AUTONOMY

Letter dated 16 July 1993 from the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion of an item entitled "Effective realization of the right of self-determination through autonomy" in the provisional agenda of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

For your information and in accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure, I am enclosing an explanatory memorandum in support of this request. In view of the potential value of a comprehensive discussion of this matter in a wider forum at an appropriate level, I respectfully request that the item be considered in plenary.

(Signed) Claudia FRITSCHE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

The Principality of Liechtenstein proposes that an item entitled "Effective realization of the right of self-determination through autonomy" be included in the agenda of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Liechtenstein became a Member of the United Nations in 1990. At the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, held in 1991, the Head of State of Liechtenstein, His Serene Highness Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein, addressed the Assembly during the general debate. He drew attention to the need to address the problems which arise for the international community where peaceful coexistence between different groups within States seems impossible to achieve or maintain. He suggested that, rather than risking cruel and destructive civil wars, solutions might be found within the broad framework of the principle of self-determination. He envisaged that, rather than waiting to deal with specific cases once they had already arisen and much emotion had already been generated, it would be better to seek in advance some guiding principles which, within the framework of self-determination, would foresee a careful evolution from simpler to more advanced levels of autonomy for communities for which such a progression was appropriate. He noted the possibility of there eventually being an international instrument to give effect to these ideas.

These ideas have been elaborated further in subsequent statements on behalf of the Principality of Liechtenstein to the General Assembly and its Committees, during the forty-seventh session of the Assembly, in 1992.

In the course of those contributions to the deliberations of the Assembly, the Government of Liechtenstein announced that it was willing to convene a meeting of experts to consider further the main ideas put forward by Liechtenstein. An invitation to nominate independent experts was subsequently extended to all Members of the United Nations, as well as to States with observer status and to international organizations and institutions. The Meeting of Experts was held in Liechtenstein from 16 to 18 March 1993; it was attended by 46 participants.

In the light of the discussions which took place during that Meeting, and on further reflection, the Government of Liechtenstein is more than ever convinced of the potential value of these matters being considered in the wider forum of the General Assembly. Internal conflicts within States, while by no means always the result of differences between distinctive communities, often have their origin in such differences, and in particular in the denial to communities of the opportunity for appropriate self-expression. Furthermore, internal conflicts are increasingly more destructive, not only for those directly involved but also for neighbouring States and for the international community. Recent experience suggests, on the one hand, that where States in which there are distinctive communities do not give those communities appropriate means of self-expression this can result in violations of human rights and even in conflict, and, on the other hand, that where adequate self-expression is granted by the States concerned to such communities the risk

of strife, with accompanying serious international implications, is greatly reduced.

At the same time, the Government of Liechtenstein believes that the principle of self-determination, which the United Nations, and the General Assembly in particular, has done so much to promote, still holds unexplored potential, which may prove of great value in helping to resolve - or better, to avoid - the serious problems which can arise from distinctive communities not having adequate means of self-expression.

Self-determination does not allow only for independence. It also encompasses other forms of political development, which may be better suited to the needs of particular communities. One of these other forms is autonomy, which is a flexible concept through which to reflect appropriate degrees of self-expression for communities in different places and at different times. It is this which the Government of Liechtenstein believes deserves particular consideration by the General Assembly, as a possible basis on which to build in the search for ways in which the international community might do something to avoid the increasingly terrible situations which, unhappily, so often arise.

The Government of Liechtenstein does not underestimate the difficulties, both political and technical, which may lie in the way of securing agreement on particular proposals in this area. The Government of Liechtenstein does, however, strongly believe that the international community, as represented in the General Assembly, should not turn away from any attempt to produce progress in these important matters, which are becoming of increasing urgency in today's world.

The Government of Liechtenstein accordingly believes that the inclusion in the agenda of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly of an item entitled "Effective realization of the right of self-determination through autonomy" would be appropriate in order to enable the relevant ideas to be explored further.

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